

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, December 19, 1876, with transcript

Letter written by Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel (Hubbard) Bell. Boston, Mass., December 19th, 1876. My darling May:

I sent you a little note this morning announcing the success of the “microscopic” battery. The more I think of it — the more important does the discovery appear.

Telephony takes a “new departure” from this day. If a microscopic battery can be made to do the work of a large and heavy apparatus — then we can vibrate the battery itself — instead of the armature of an electro-magnet — and obtain sounds of any desired loudness. Loudness is obtained by occasioning variations in the strength of the current — and surely this can be best effected by going to the source of the power — the battery itself — and vibrating that.

Hair is an excellent non-conductor of electricity — and it is probable that hair may afford some slight protection from lightening. Still an insulatory material to be of much benefit should be placed underneath one — between one's body and the ground — or better still — all around one. A lady in a silk dress — with silk stockings on and with her hair well “frizzled” up — may be considered well-nigh impervious to the electric fluid!!

By the bye we had a most extraordinary electrical display yesterday — for this season of the year.

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The morning opened with a blinding snow-storm. Hail, snow and wind strove for the mastery. Toward the afternoon the weather changed its mind and began to rain — and

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about five o'clock it so far forgot the season of the year as to indulge in a tremendous clap of thunder and a blinding flash of lightening.

A single flash and a solitary crash — and it was all over. The rain and snow and slush however continued till night — when winter once more asserted his supremacy — and bound the whole city in his icy chains. This morning was bright and clear and frosty — and the trees sparkled in the sunbeams as though they were covered with gems.

You will be glad to hear that I have at last handed over my correspondence to a “private secretary”!! You remember my telling you of a young lady (partially deaf) who wished to obtain some employment. Well — she is now — for the time being — my secretary. She reads my letters and answers them. Don't you think I better get her to read yours for me and reply to them ?! She was greatly astonished and shocked upon reading the enclosed letter from “Pearl” — ? who is evidently jealous of you — and says “I don't want you to love anyone” — and again asks “M'aimez vous — Do you love me?” — Are you not jealous? Well if you are please don't destroy the letter as there are things of value in it.

The Chicago School for Deaf children is a success and is to be started this week. Miss Mack has left to take charge of it. In Marquette also — it seems likely that the same plan will be followed. I have a letter from Mr. Fraser (father of one of the deaf children) — who is organizing the school. The parents of four children are to unite for the purpose of securing a teacher — and it is probable that other children may join the school.

I have heard from St. Louis — and although the formation of a school there seems somewhat uncertain — still it is likely that a private teacher will go there shortly.

How is your grandfather? Please remember me to him. When shall I see you again? How is Gertrude? Why don't you both come on to poor desolate Boston — and bring a little of your sunshine with you. Please give ever so much love to your mother and Gertrude and to your Auntie Berta — Don't forget Mr. Marsh too — and a heartfelt love for yourself.

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From your Alec. Miss Mabel Hubbard, New York. I enclose newspaper cutting which please return.